POLICY OF SCOIL MHUIRE CBS, MARINO		
Document Title:	**Anti-Bullying Policy**	
Effective Date:	**September 2023**	
Document No:4	**Revision No:4**	**No. of pages:12**

1. Purpose

In accordance with the requirements of the *Education (Welfare) Act* (2000) and *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (*2008), the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire CBS, Marino has adopted the following Anti-Bullying Policy within the framework of the school's overall Code of Behaviour. This policy fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (2013) and takes cognisance of the Department of Education's action plan on bullying, *Cineáltas* (2022).

Scoil Mhuire CBS is an Edmund Rice school, and as such strives to promote equality of access and participation: pupils of any faith or none, at every level of ability, of any nationality or ethnic group are each given the opportunity to achieve their full potential in a caring school community. Care for the disadvantaged and vulnerable, a strong opposition to poverty and injustice, and fostering leadership are some of the key characteristics of an Edmund Rice school. Bullying behaviours of any kind run contrary to the distinguishing ethos and spirit of Scoil Mhuire CBS. This Anti-Bullying Policy is a key part of the school's wider efforts to create and maintain a safe and secure learning environment for each of our pupils.

2. Scope

Like the Code of Behaviour, this Anti-Bullying Policy applies to all pupils of Scoil Mhuire CBS as they participate in school activities, including those which take place off the school premises. This Anti-Bullying Policy also applies to all pupils who are identifiable members of the school community. Pupils are deemed to be identifiable members of the school community when wearing their school uniform or while going to and from school in their normal manner. If a pupil normally walks to and from school, then they are – while on their normal route approved by their family – covered by school policies between their home and school.

Cyber bullying has become increasingly common and is continuously evolving. As cyber bullying uses digital technologies to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber bullying can occur at any time. Being the target of inappropriate or hurtful messages is the most common form of cyber bullying (DES, 2013). Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying but may fall within the scope of the school's Code of Behaviour. However, in the context of this Anti-Bullying Policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image, or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image, or statement can be viewed, reposted, or shared by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour. The school will investigate alleged incidents of cyber bullying involving pupils of Scoil Mhuire CBS where these incidents are brought to the attention of school personnel (either by pupils themselves, their families, or members of the wider school community). In such instances, the school's investigation will be based on the evidence made available to us (for example screenshots). Families should therefore be aware that this Anti-Bullying Policy applies to

pupils of Scoil Mhuire CBS in all of their online interactions with fellow pupils. Similarly, families should be aware that any data shared in the form of evidence will be held for the purposes of the investigation in accordance with the school's data protection policy and procedures.

3. Principles

Scoil Mhuire CBS seeks to provide a safe, well-ordered environment conducive to socialising and learning: promoting respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages, and ways of life in society; promoting habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in groups and communities; and takes particular care of at-risk pupils to provide early intervention in response to the needs, fears, and anxieties of individual pupils in a sensitive manner.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

The Board of Management, alongside school staff, recognises the very serious nature of bullying and the negative impact that it can have on the lives of pupils and is therefore fully committed to the following key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour:

- A positive school culture and climate is one which
    - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
    - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment, and
    - promotes respectful relationships across the school community
- Effective leadership
- Has a whole school approach
- Shares understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- Implements education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that
    - build empathy, respect, and resilience in pupils and
    - explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying
- Effective supervision and monitoring of pupils
- Supports for staff
- Consistent recording, investigation, and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies), and
- On-going evaluation of the effectiveness of this Anti-Bullying Policy

WHAT IS BULLYING?

In accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* bullying is defined as follows:

> ***Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological, or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time*** (DES, 2013, p. 5).

The following types of behaviour are included in this definition of bullying:
- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip, and other forms of relational bullying,
- cyber bullying, and
- identity-based bullying such as: homophobic bullying; racist bullying; bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community; and bullying of those with disabilities or additional educational needs.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Additional information on different types of bullying is set out in the Department of Education's *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (2013).

4. Key Terms

In the context of this policy, and the school's wider discussions on bullying behaviours and bullying cultures, these key terms will be understood as follows:

Bullying behaviour	Bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour – verbal, psychological, or physical – conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time. This definition includes cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying.
Relational bullying	Relational bullying occurs when a person's attempts to socialise and form relationships with peers are repeatedly rejected or undermined. One of the most common forms includes control: "Do this or I won't be your friend anymore" (implied or stated); a group ganging up against one person; encouraging peers to exclude or ignore an individual; non-verbal gesturing; malicious gossip; spreading rumours about a person or giving them the "silent treatment".
Physical bullying	Physical bullying includes hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching, pushing, or damaging property. Physical bullying causes both short-term and long-term damage.
Psychological bullying	This includes – but is not limited to – socially isolating an individual, demeaning or sarcastic comments, gestures, and threatening comments and behavior.
Verbal bullying	Verbal bulling includes name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, discriminatory remarks, or verbal abuse.

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Cyber bullying	Cyber bullying is carried out through the use of digital technologies such as social media, messaging apps, gaming sites, email, instant messaging, apps, chat-rooms and other online technologies. As cyber bullying uses technology to perpetrate bullying behaviour and does not require face to face contact, cyber-bullying can occur at any time. Many forms of bullying can be facilitated through cyber-bullying, for example a target may be sent homophobic messages or images may be posted with negative comments about a person's sexuality.
Isolation or Exclusion	This occurs where a certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded, or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour and can be difficult to detect. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the pupil in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the pupil or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.
Intimidation	Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it may be based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting can be a facial expression which can convey aggression or dislike.
Bystander	A bystander is someone who 'stands by' and watches something happen - like bullying - without doing anything to stop it. They are not directly involved, but have the choice to intervene, speak up, or do something about it. In instances, some bystanders encourage the unfair behaviour and cause increased torment for the person being bullied by laughing, cheering or making comments that further stimulate the bully.
Discrimination	Discrimination is the unfavourable treatment of a person, or the violation of their dignity, on specific grounds including any of the nine stated grounds highlighted in Equality Legislation (*gender and gender identity, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community*).

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Homophobia	Homophobia encompasses a range of negative attitudes, feelings and actions toward homosexuality or people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
Transgender	Relating to, or being a person whose gender identity differs from the gender assigned at birth.
Transphobia	Transphobia encompasses a range of negative attitudes, feelings and actions towards transgenderism or people who are identified or perceived as being transgender.

5. Policy

This Anti-Bullying Policy of Scoil Mhuire CBS seeks:

- to create and maintain a school culture which encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour
- to raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour within the entire school community
- to ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation
- to develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour
- to develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour
- to develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour
- to work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour
- to evaluate the effectiveness of school policy on anti-bullying
- to identify who is responsible for investigating and dealing with bullying issues
- to implement strategies to prevent bullying behaviours, and
- to ensure children are equipped with skills to deal with bullying incidents as they occur.

EDUCATION AND PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Scoil Mhuire CBS prides itself on being a **telling school,** whereby pupils are encouraged to disclose if they feel that they are being bullied by another pupil or group of pupils. Pupils are also strongly encouraged to inform staff if they notice that another pupil is being victimised or targeted in any way. It is very important in our school to bring the topic of bullying out into the open and to develop and sustain an atmosphere whereby pupils know that it is ok to tell. It is consistently made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying, they are not considered to be telling tales, but are behaving responsibly.

Scoil Mhuire CBS is also a **listening school**, whereby pupils are given the opportunity to share, and feel comfortable sharing, their concerns: with their peers; with their teacher(s); with non-teaching staff; or with school management. The Student Council provides a formal forum in which pupils are given the space to raise issues, vocalise concerns, and contribute positively to the development of a safe and secure school environment. Their monthly meetings are attended by school management, and the Student Council is a vehicle through which pupils can help to support and lift one another, encouraging a culture of peer respect and support.

The education and prevention strategies (including strategies specifically aimed at cyber bullying and identity-based bullying including, in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying) that will be used by the school at the appropriate level for each class are as follows:

- Faithful implementation of the SPHE Curriculum (including both the *Stay Safe* and *Relationships and Sexuality* components of the programme) equips pupils with both an awareness of their responsibilities as members of a community, and with the language to express that certain behaviours are inappropriate or make them uncomfortable.
- Evidence-based programmes such as *ABI* and *Weaving Wellbeing* are available to all staff to supplement the delivery of the SPHE Curriculum as appropriate.
- Age-appropriate delivery of lessons focusing explicitly on the topic of bullying.
- Targeted delivery of lessons dealing explicitly with the standards of behaviour expected of pupils as digital citizens.
- Targeted delivery of lessons exploring cyber bullying.
- Where appropriate, targeted lessons exploring bullying and cyber bullying are delivered by external experts.
- Safer Internet Day is acknowledged annually.
- Through the discussion of reading materials explored in various class levels (for example *Benny & Omar*, *Harry Potter & the Philosopher's Stone*, *The Outsiders*), pupils are given the opportunity to discuss topics such as the variety of family structures in society.
- A variety of picture books – exploring the themes of bullying, exclusion, discrimination, and empathy – are available to staff to supplement the delivery of the SPHE Curriculum as appropriate.
- Through the delivery of elements of the SESE Curriculum (for example the treatment of Aboriginal Australian people, the Civil Rights Movement, the Second World War) pupils are offered a structured opportunity to engage in scaffolded discussions exploring social justice and discrimination.
- Implementation of the *Grow in Love* programme.
- Participation in Wellbeing Wednesday activities – devised by the Social and Wellbeing Committee in partnership with the Student Council – supports the development of school morale and a sense of community.
- Mobile phones may only be brought to school by pupils who have sought the permission of management to do so. As per the school's Use of Electronic Devices Policy, phones must be turned off prior to entry to the premises and handed up to the relevant teacher for the duration of the school day.

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Monthly Parents' Association meetings are attended by the Principal or the Deputy Principal, at which any issues arising with regard to behaviour or bullying cultures can be discussed in an open, collaborative forum. In collaboration with the Parents' Association, the school facilitates and arranges talks for parents on the topic of cyber bullying. These educational talks take place every few years, and it is anticipated that during their time as a member of the Scoil Mhuire community, parents will have the opportunity to attend such a talk at least once.

The staff of Scoil Mhuire CBS reiterate, throughout the year, our expectations for pupil behaviour and pupils' interactions with one another. Best practice is modelled by addressing all pupils with respect, and staff frequently emphasise the principle of respect for others which is a foundational component of our characteristic ethos.

INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

The relevant teacher(s) for investigating alleged incidents of bullying and bullying behaviours is the Class Teacher of the pupil(s) involved, however any teacher may act as a relevant teacher if the circumstances warrant it.

Families are encouraged to make early contact with the school if they suspect that their child is involved in a bullying incident, either as the target of bullying or somebody engaging in bullying behaviours. The designated point of contact of in such instances is the Class Teacher.

In Scoil Mhuire CBS, all allegations of bullying are reported to the Principal who will be kept abreast of an investigation by the relevant teacher(s). The Principal may become involved in a formal capacity at certain stages of the process.

PROCEDURES

In investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying and bullying behaviours, the school's principal aim is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved. Every effort will be made to ensure that all involved – including pupils and their families – understand this approach from the outset. Therefore, where an investigation is taking place, pupils and their families are required to cooperate fully and assist the school in resolving issues and, where possible and practicable, repairing relationships that have been damaged. In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher(s) will exercise professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred, what type of bullying has occurred, and how best the situation might be resolved.

The school's procedures for investigation, follow-up, and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- Where a teacher is made aware of an allegation of bullying the Principal is notified.
- Initial investigations into allegations of bullying and bullying behaviours will be conducted by the relevant teacher(s).
- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff, or families.

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- Insofar as is possible, investigations will be conducted outside the classroom to ensure the privacy of all involved. However, where circumstances warrant it, classroom discussions may be facilitated to tease out the intricacies of a situation.

- All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.

- All parties involved will have the opportunity to be heard.

- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher(s) will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

- If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually at first. Thereafter, all those involved will be met as a group. At the group meeting, each member will be asked for their account of what happened to ensure that everyone in the group is clear about each other's statements.

- Each member of a group will be supported through the possible pressures that may face them from the other members of the group after interview by the teacher.

- Where appropriate, the relevant teacher(s) may ask those involved to write down their account of the incident(s).

- The purpose of such an investigation is to determine if the incident(s) in question constitute bullying as defined in this policy.

- Where the relevant teacher(s) has determined that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to them that they are in breach of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour. Efforts will be made to help them see the situation from the perspective of the pupil(s) being targeted.

- In cases where it has been determined by the relevant teacher(s) that bullying behaviour has occurred, the families of all parties involved will be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken. The school will give families an opportunity to discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions being taken by the school. It will also be made clear to all involved (each pupil and their family) that in any situation where disciplinary action is required, this is a private matter between the pupil being sanctioned, their family, and the school.

- Where it is determined by the relevant teacher(s) that bullying has occurred, a written record must be kept and passed on to the Principal or Deputy Principal (see Appendix A). These records will be kept in a secure place in the school.

- Where a bullying incident is particularly serious, and the behaviour involved is regarded as potentially abusive, the Principal reserves the right to contact external agencies such as HSE or the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPSs). Where this action is deemed necessary, families will be informed.

- The Principal will inform the Board of Management of instances of bullying and bullying behaviour.

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SUPPORTS FOR PUPILS AFFECTED BY BULLYING

A pupil who is or has been the target of bullying behaviour often needs support, not just during the period in question or the ensuing investigation, but in the aftermath. In Scoil Mhuire CBS we consider it very important to do what we can to aid such pupils. This may take the form of: speaking with the pupil individually; endeavouring to increase their feelings of self-esteem through discussion or targeted, carefully-designed activities; impressing on the pupil the fact that they were correct to disclose instances of bullying and advising them on how to cope with any future instances which might arise. Where appropriate, pupils will also be supported in repairing relationships damaged by bullying and bullying behaviour.

A programme of support for those pupils who have engaged in bullying behaviour is also part of the school's intervention process. Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an on-going basis. For those with low self-esteem, opportunities will be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Pupils will also be encouraged to, and supported in, imagining events from multiple perspectives. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may also need professional guidance to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. Strong collaboration between home and school will be essential in supporting pupils who have engaged in bullying behaviours.

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour will be encouraged to discuss them with staff and their families. Teachers will provide an opportunity for pupils to do this is during Circle Time activities, class discussions, or as part of the SPHE Curriculum. If pupils are not comfortable sharing in a public forum, it is made clear that they may also indicate to the teacher that they want to speak privately or even leave a note.

SUPERVISING AND MONITORING

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire CBS confirms that appropriate supervision and monitoring procedures and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour, and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

PREVENTION OF HARRASSMENT

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire CBS confirms that the school will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of pupils or staff, or the harassment of pupils or staff on any of the nine grounds specified in Equality Legislation i.e. gender including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

6. Appendices

APPENDIX A: TEMPLATE FOR RECORDING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

1. Name of pupil being bullied and class group

Name _____Class_____

2. Name(s) and class(es) of pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour

3. Source of bullying concern/report (tick relevant box(es))*

Pupil concerned	
Other Pupil	
Parent	
Teacher	
Other	

4. Location of incidents (tick relevant box(es))*

Playground	
Classroom	
Corridor	
Toilets	
School Bus	
Other	

5. Name of person(s) who reported the bullying concern

6. Type of Bullying Behaviour (tick relevant box(es)) *

Physical Aggression		Cyber-bullying	
Damage to Property		Intimidation	
Isolation/Exclusion		Malicious Gossip	
Name Calling		Other (specify)	

7. Where behaviour is regarded as identity-based bullying, indicate the relevant category:

Homophobic	Disability/SEN related	Racist	Membership of Traveller community	Other (specify)

8. Brief Description of bullying behaviour and its impact

9. Details of actions taken

Signed _____ (Relevant Teacher) Date _____

APPENDIX B: CHECKLIST FOR REVIEW OF ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

The Board of Management (the Board) must undertake an annual review of the school's anti-bullying policy and its implementation. The following checklist must be used for this purpose. The checklist is an aid to conducting this review and is not intended as an exhaustive list. In order to complete the checklist, an examination and review involving both quantitative and qualitative analysis, as appropriate across the various elements of the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy will be required.

	Yes /No
Has the Board formally adopted an anti-bullying policy that fully complies with the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*?	
Has the Board published the policy on the school website and provided a copy to the parents' association?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been made available to school staff (including new staff)?	
Is the Board satisfied that school staff are sufficiently familiar with the policy and procedures to enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy and procedures in their day to day work?	
Has the Board ensured that the policy has been adequately communicated to all pupils?	
Has the policy documented the prevention and education strategies that the school applies?	
Have all of the prevention and education strategies been implemented?	
Has the effectiveness of the prevention and education strategies that have been implemented been examined?	
Is the Board satisfied that all teachers are recording and dealing with incidents in accordance with the policy?	
Has the Board received and minuted the periodic summary reports of the Principal?	
Has the Board discussed how well the school is handling all reports of bullying including those addressed at an early stage and not therefore included in the Principal's periodic report to the Board?	
Has the Board received any complaints from parents regarding the school's handling of bullying incidents?	
Have any parents withdrawn their child from the school citing dissatisfaction with the school's handling of a bullying situation?	
Have any Ombudsman for Children investigations into the school's handling of a bullying case been initiated or completed?	
Has the data available from cases reported to the Principal (by the bullying recording template) been analysed to identify any issues, trends or patterns in bullying behaviour?	
Has the Board identified any aspects of the school's policy and/or its implementation that require further improvement?	
Has the Board put in place an action plan to address any areas for improvement?	

Signed _____   Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____   Date _____
Principal

7. Approval and Review

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire CBS on 13th June, 2023.

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website, and provided to the Parents' Association.

A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education, the Patron, and the Trust if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website, and provided to the Parents' Association.

_____   _____

Chairperson of the Board of Management   Principal

_____13th June, 2023_____.

Date

_____1st September, 2023_____.

Effective Date